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SUBJECT: Pronk Ejected, Europeans React Strongly

REF: Khartoum 2519

¶1. (U) The GoS terminated the mission of UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Jan Pronk on October 22 following statements Pronk made in his blog concerning recent military defeats in Darfur (reftel). In a letter from Foreign Minister Lam Akol to UN Secretary General (SYG) Kofi Annan, the Sudanese affirm their support of the United Nations and its mission but emphasize that Pronk himself had repeatedly acted in a manner inconsistent with his position. He said Pronk was not impartial, purposefully undermining the Darfur Peace Agreement and making many inflammatory statements.

¶2. (U) This decision comes days after a Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) spokesperson called for Pronk's departure soon after the blog was published. This is not the first furor over Pronk's statements in his blog, which the UN has repeatedly asserted does not necessarily reflect the policies and views of the Secretary-General. Pronk is returning to New York on October 23 for consultations with the SYG.

¶3. (SBU) In a meeting between the Charge d'Affaires and European Ambassadors that same day, the Europeans expressed their strong disapproval of this action. While they admitted that Pronk had said some inappropriate things on several occasions, the Sudanese should not be able to pick who represents the Secretary General. They recommended that each country go to its capital and ask for a strong statement that condemns the decision, asks the GoS to reconsider, and underlines that this will be viewed as an attack against an international presence in Sudan as a whole. They emphasized that the international community should be unified in its message.

¶4. (SBU) The ambassadors noted that the timing of the announcement, the day before government offices are closed for a week for Eid al Fitr, limits the international community's ability to lodge a protest. The Ambassadors recommended that the issue be brought up in conversations during an Eid reception hosted by the President the next day. The German Ambassador, as the representative of the EU President, was also asked to register concern with the President directly. The German did this in the receiving line the next day. President Bashir seemed unhappy with the comment and only responded that it was Sudanese sovereignty.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Last week's visit of the Special Envoy was viewed positively by the Sudanese government and may allow for more productive discussions in the future. Although declaring the SRSG persona non-grata is a serious step, the central issue remains Darfur and UN transition. This move will negatively impact UN planning, as it is unlikely that a replacement can be named soon. However, the declaration is likely a direct result of Pronk's comments and not part of an overall strategy to oppose the UN. END COMMENT.

POWERS